

When Killing is Easy

aka Shooting the Messenger

Why are foreigners suddenly under fire in Israel?

In May 2003 James Miller, a British cameraman with considerable experience of filming in war zones, was shot dead by Israeli soldiers. In April, British photographer Tom Hurndall was shot as he tried to rescue a terrified Palestinian child from a hail of Israeli bullets. In March, an American peace activist, Rachel Corrie, died after she was crushed by an Israeli bulldozer. Do these attacks represent a culture of killing with impunity which is sanctioned by the higher echelons of the Israeli army?

Last May, a British cameraman approached an Israeli armoured personnel carrier at night with a request for free passage. The Israelis in the APC knew who the cameraman was – they'd earlier watched him film Israeli bulldozers knock down Palestinian houses. At one stage the Israelis had even called out to the team. James Miller had a lot of experience of filming in war zones. Now he and his colleagues, all of them wearing body armour and helmets marked "TV", were walking towards the APC shouting: "We are British journalists". They were pointing a powerful torch at a white flag. Seven shots rang out: the second hit James. He died shortly afterwards.

James Miller was killed on the border between Egypt and the Gaza Strip which is intensively patrolled by Israeli forces. He was the third Westerner to be attacked in as many months in the same border area.

In April, Tom Hurndall, a British photographer was cut down as he tried to rescue a terrified Palestinian child caught in a hail of Israeli bullets. He is now virtually brain dead.

In March, an American peace activist, Rachel Corrie, died after she was crushed by an Israeli bulldozer.

Palestinian photographers and cameramen, often working for the big news agencies in the West Bank and Gaza, have long been shot at by Israeli soldiers. What is new is that foreigners, whether journalists or peace activists, are now increasingly the targets of attacks.

Shooting the Messenger meticulously examines the Corrie, Hurndall and Miller cases, revisiting the border locations where the attacks occurred and interviewing key eyewitnesses as leading experts in Britain examine the forensic evidence, including unique footage of the two shootings. The Israeli Defence Forces are also asked to explain the incomplete and sometimes contradictory interpretations of the attacks which they have provided so far.

Were the attacks random acts of violence by undisciplined soldiers, or the product of a culture of killing with impunity which is sanctioned by the upper echelons of the army? And how is the rest of the world to know the truth about the Israeli occupation if the Israeli army is free to attack those international journalists and activists who venture into this war zone?

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